Ballet TODAY

1/6

ANN HORN

BALLET TODAY

Cover Portrait
Ann Horn, prima ballerina of the Ballet Rambert
An exclusive Ballet Today *photograph by Mike Davis*

CONTENTS

No. 8 **OCTOBER, 1957** **VOL. 10**

Backstage	3
News from the World	4
Edinburgh Festival	6
London Ballet Month	7
Ballet Rambert	9
Careers in Pictures—Yvette Chauviré	10
Interview with Ana Ricarda	15
New Books	16
Men in Ballet—Keith Beckett	17
New Recordings	18
Beryl Grey's Tour	19
The Month's Programmes	19
The Reminiscences of Boris Kniaseff	21
Featuring the Schools	22

NEXT MONTH'S SPECIAL FEATURE

Fonteyn's Australian Tour 1957 with pictures, press reports and story of her first visit to that country.

FROM CHINA

In my Editorial last month I expressed the hope that some enterprising impresario would remember that three out of the four big dance companies would be leaving the capital (mainly for far-off places) during early September. Peter Daubeny has made an excellent start to enliven the autumn season by chalking up yet another "first" for London, the Chinese Classical Theatre now at Drury Lane. This is not of course the same Company which he presented at the Palace Theatre in 1955.

The word "Opera" used in their title is rather misleading, for their programme is made up of drama with music, singing, dancing and fantastic acrobatics based on their traditional tales of mythology. Their "opera-dramas" have remained unaltered for centuries. It takes 15 years to train a Chinese actor in the many roles they have to perform, all the 70 members of this Company have been trained since childhood. The task of putting on each elaborate make-up can take as long as four hours, for no masks are worn and each fantastic character is "created" anew for every performance.

NEGRO BALLET

Another Company which Peter Daubeny is presenting for the first time in England is the New York Negro Ballet. They are to commence a provincial tour on September 23rd when they open up at Edinburgh. It is hoped that later they will come to London for a season. The Company consists of 24 dancers recruited from Broadway musicals and Hollywood ballet film units. They have already appeared in various parts of America with great success.

Their Ballet Orchestra will be conducted by Edward Clark, their Regisseur is Thelma Hill, and Michel de Lutry is Ballet Master.

They aim to present some serious works by first-rate choreographers in the best classical ballet traditions, at the same time exploiting present-day trends in modern ballet, and also use their own rich heritage of traditional negro dances.

Photo left: Fonteyn arriving in Australia

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BACKSTAGE

The Company takes a bow at the end of their eighth anniversary Gala performance. Taken at the Festival Hall London by Mike Davis.

Festival Ballet gave their usual Gala Performance as they neared the end of their London season on the 5th September. The programme consisted of the ever-popular *Symphony for Fun, Concerto* danced by Marilyn Burr and Michael Hogan in the second movement, and to end the first half of the programme guest artists for the evening Marjorie Tallchief and George Skibine in *Annabel Lee.*

In the second half of the evening Anton Dolin with his usual magic produced the surprise item out of the hat in his *Variations for Four* (he could have taken his title from *Ballet Today*'s own popular feature "Men in Ballet" for this was a pas de quartre for male dancers)—Andre Prokovsky making a first appearance in England, Flemming Flindt, Louis Godfrey, and John Gilpin. This item certainly is a good vehicle for showing off the paces of these young, virile dancers of Festival Ballet. I wish some of the fans who write to me asking me to declare which is *the* favourite male dancer would see this and for ever afterwards judge for themselves. *Graduation Ball* followed, with Natalie Krassovska and Jean-Pierre Alban dancing the Sylphide and the Scotsman divertissement. In his speech which followed Anton Dolin said that this—the eighth anniversary of the Company—came as a climax to what had been a fantastic season for Festival Ballet. After a very successful foreign tour, this season in London had broken all records for attendances. "We know our virtues," he concluded, "and we have read about our faults, but the audiences have made it quite clear that they like our work, and that this is a Company of which we can be proud."

Festival Ballet are now commencing a provincial tour, but will return to Festival Hall for a season from December 23rd to January 11th when they will present Lichine's *The Nutcracker* in its entirety for the first time in England. The whole production will be under the personal supervision of Alexandre Benois, who will also design costumes and decor.

The comings and goings of Festival Ballet dancers are difficult to keep up with at the moment. A welcome return to the Company is that of Natalie Krassovska, who was of course one of its first ballerinas. Toni Lander has dropped out on doctor's orders for at least three months complete rest, and Belinda Wright, who will in the future be expecting a happy event, will not be dancing for at least 18 months. Belinda is married to Wolfgang Brunner, choregrapher and dancer, whose first ballet *Les Deux Errants* was first produced on the Continent and later taken into the repertoire of the Festival Ballet. Towards the end of last year Mr. and Mrs. Brunner took over a large studio and converted it into a home. All their free time was spent on it, for they took the job seriously, and both of them gave a hand even at bricklaying. Congratulations to them both.

ANTON DOLIN

In recognition of his 35 years' outstanding contribution to British Ballet the Royal Academy of Dancing have honoured Anton Dolin by the award to him of the Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Award. This takes the form of a silver plaque which is held by the recipient for one year. The formal presentation was made at a luncheon given to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the granting of the Royal Charter to the Royal Academy of Dancing.

The Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Award was instituted in Coronation Year—Dame Adeline Genée is the donor—and has since been awarded to Dame Ninette de Valois; Madame Karsavina and Madame Rambert.

Honour for John Gilpin

The first recipients under a new award created by the Academie Nationale de Physique et de Danse—The Prix Vaslav Nijinsky—for the three most brilliant male dancers to have appeared in Paris during the year, are Charles Renault, Serge Golovine and our own John Gilpin of Festival Ballet. This was the second honour accorded to a member of Festival Ballet, during their recent foreign tour. The King of Denmark bestowed on Toni Lander the Knight Cross of the Order of Danneborg, which is the equivalent of the British D.B.E.

(*Backstage contd. on page 6*)

News from

From New York

Hope Sheridan

In skimming the dance season which so far has been a poor one indeed it would be niggardly to overlook the refreshing contribution made by the National Ballet of Canada during their appearance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on Saturday, March 30th.

These young artists, performing under the handicaps of a small stage, an even smaller budget and limited professional performance opportunities, have succeeded in imbuing their productions with stage assurance and more than a sufficient degree of professionalism.

Their productions bear every evidence of careful planning, attention to detail and painstaking rehearsal. The individual dancers have brought to these performances a full sense of artistic integrity and a refreshing sincerity.

Perhaps, the outstanding example of this is the company's production of *Giselle*. All that honesty and hard work can do to enhance this 19th century classic was vividly evident. Nothing has been left to chance. Crowd scenes are very carefully manipulated and placed. The solo dancers show every evidence of thoughtful preparation for their roles and know exactly what they are about in relation to each other. If their penetration of the main roles is still to come, it is these things which may be rectified by time and performance.

While Celia Franca's portrayal of Giselle is a perfect example of an intellect at work, she is not ideally suited for the title role. Her face and her carriage are far too reminiscent of our stage conceptions of nobility and authority to warrant the belief that she is a naive peasant girl, however, her projection of the role almost overcomes her physical drawbacks. She is a good dancer and her ballon helps promote a fine sense of youthful ebullience. Lois Smith, while a nice dancer, does not have the necessary malignance for a truly ruthless picture of Myrtha. To add insult to injury, Kay Ambrose has designed a costume for this role which almost defies movement. David Adams was most commendable as Albrecht. His dancing has a masculinity and dignity which are a pleasure to observe. He needs further work to round out his Albrecht as an absolutely complete stage portrait. However, after watching his growth over the last two years, I have no doubt but that the role will soon be completely within his reach.

Returning to New York on April 21st after an absence of nearly two years the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo opened a two weeks spring engagement at the Metropolitan. It would be pleasing to say that it was rewarding to have them back, but good intentions are not enough, as was clearly evident as the season unfolded, for they cannot overcome exhaustion or lack of artistic direction.

The New York première of Heinz Rosen's *La Dame a la Licorne*, was given on April 22nd. The new work is set to a libretto by Jean Cocteau, costumes by Karenska and danced to music by Jacques Chailley. The famous Gobelin tapestries known as "a la Licorne" provide the basis for this story. According to the legend, the unicorn will eat only from the hand of a virgin. One day the maiden, who has lived in purity and contentment with her unicorn, is visited by a knight errant. He brings to her knowledge of human, passionate love. This knowledge, however, must mean the passing of the unicorn. The knight, stricken by remorse for the damage he has done, returns, but the maiden, mourning her dead unicorn, will not acknowledge him. The knight rides away never to return. The maiden is left alone in the silence of the interminable forest with her enigmatic motto "mon seul desir".

All the elements necessary to make a good ballet were present at the outset of *La Dame a la Licorne*. Cocteau has rendered legends thoroughly believable before, Karenska certainly has proven her capacity to enchant, while the basis of the story is that of the most beautiful of the Gobelins. Unfortunately, the energy vital to any work of the theatre is its creator's basic talent. In this case, the failure of this life force lay with the ballet's choreographer, Heinz Rosen. The essence of the ballet is a highly elusive thing in itself, filled with poignant, unspoken yearnings. It would take a choreographer of no mean talent to successfully capture its mood. Mr. Rosen was neither equipped with a sense of period nor with the technical language with which to translate the librettist's intent. A story of such fragile evocations is no place for the time-worn, late nineteenth century, European opera-ballet clichés Rosen utilised over and over. The tendency in the German theatre to literalize each passing phrase was in evidence at every turn; for example the need to encumber the noble Youskevitch with the frame work of a blue papier maché lion. The elegance and airiness of the knight's first appearance was banished by the ludicrousness of the dancer strapped into the lion's frame which began at his waist and created an illusion that he was astride a blue lion. Further examples of this were to be found in the movements designed for the unicorn; pawing gestures, little stretching figurations with the head and neck. To add insult to injury, at the end of the ballet, the motto "mon seul desir" painted on a placard was lowered from the flies into stage centre at which point the lights dimmed and the curtain fell. How many times in the same ballet can a choreographer dodge coming to grips with his subject matter?

Igor Youskevitch danced the knight with conscience and bearing. Irina Borowska brought a sense of period and depth to the role of the Lady. Nina Novak was wasted in this fruitless role of the White Unicorn.

April 24th saw the New York première of *Harlequinade*. The ballet is based upon the longer *Les Millions d'Harlequin* which occupied a full evening during its performances in St. Petersburg. The Drigo score has long barren patches of neither melodic nor harmonic invention. Choreographer Romanoff, perhaps aware of this, drew a much shorter version from the original. *Harlequinade* runs only about forty minutes, but even then it is too long, for Mr. Romanoff has fashioned only enough choreography to fit possibly twenty to twenty-five minutes of music. We are treated to interminable patches of carnival scenes with the corps in commedia dell arte masks and costumes hopping first to stage right then stage left. The only bright spots in the choreographic fog being the pas de deux and variations for Alonso and Youskevitch and a final solo for Eugen Slavin as Pierrot. Neither Youskevitch nor Alonso have that mercurial sophistication necessary for the conception of Columbine or Harlequin and fare badly in choreography or plot which requires it of them. Eugene Slavin danced a fine performance of a mediocre role as Pierrot. The rest of the cast is lost in a welter of unfortunate pink scenery set somewhere in Venice but more reminiscent of some confectionery scene to be found atop a German wedding anniversary cake circa 1880. Nina Novak and her partner Alan Howard appeared better suited to the name roles when they danced on the very next evening.

Antonia Cobas' new ballet was given its première on Thursday, April 25th. It is based on Gilbert's *The Mikado* and utilizes Sullivan's music orchestrated by Vittoria Rieti. It boasts some fairly suitable Japanese costumes by Bernard Lamotte. The characters are also named after those in the famous operetta. Beyond this point it is impossible to draw even the faintest relationship between the ballet and its famous vocal counterpart. There is almost no coherent stage action with the exception of a short and succinct solo for Alan Howard as Nanki-Poo to the famous "Wandering Minstrel I" aria.

Plodding on to the next première on Friday, April 26th, Leon Danielian's new ballet *Sombreros* proved to be no oasis on the season's choreographic desert. Set to Mexican folk tunes orchestrated by Ivan Boutnekoff and dressed in gay, simple folk costumes by William Cecil, *Sombreros*, looked like relief in sight but on more careful examination proved to be just as devoid of invention as the three new ballets directly preceding it. However, it is a first try and as such is to be accepted for the slight work it is. Danielian has chosen light Mexican folk tunes of no great variety yet of a certain charm. To these he has set in dance form the ritual of courting under the watchful eye of the duennas. Most of the dances take the form of circular patterns with the constantly repeating folk step. The girls are occasionally given classical enchaînements en pointe which appear incongruous against the Mexican costumes and folk music. Irina Borowska and Deni Lamont are lively and agreeable. Miss Borowska is given a difficult classical variation in which she acquits herself with ease but her efforts are almost lost in the shuffle of gaudily coloured costumes.

As a matter of fact, I can think of no single phrase which better describes the Ballet Russes present state than that of "without élan".

GEORGE JACKSON FROM CHICAGO

Chicago Ballet Guild gave two programmes, May 19th and June 16th, at the 8th Street Theatre. Both included *Arabesques*, a dance suite whose form and brisk, neo-classical choreographic content indicate that its creator, Eric Braun (formerly of the Vienna State Opera and more recently a soloist with the American Ballet Theatre) has been influenced by Balanchine. This influence has been beneficial to the extent that this ballet is a competent piece of craftsmanship but unlike the best Balanchine works, *Arabesques* lacks imagination, inspiration and insight into the music selected from the compositions of Mozart. Traditionally but elegantly costumed by June Doherty, it is danced against a grillwork background by Chicago Ballet Guild's corps de ballet and soloists who were almost up to the strict academic requirements of the choreography. Mr. Braun's own dancing of a difficult solo sacrificed quality to quantity.

the World

Also on both programmes was *Petite Histoires de Ballet* with music ranging from the 1581 tune *La Clochette* to the contemporary sounds of Ernst Toch. The amateurish choreography, costumes and decor were all by Loyd Tygett. Another amateurish ballet was Etta Burro's *The Snow Maiden* on the June 16th programme; the music was by Ian Cutter which the late Catherine Littlefield had once choreographed for the now extinct Philadelphia Ballet. This revival of *The Snow Maiden* was intended to be a memorial to the Philadelphia Ballet, but those who never saw that company can only hope it was an unworthy one.

A welcome change from the classroom classicism of these pieces was *Dance*! by modern dancer Phyllis Sabold to a piano sonata by Poulenc, performed on the June 16th programme. The four movements—respectively "with spirit, with charm, with contact, with vigour"—were danced in a fluent, easy style by Miss Sabold, Eric Braun and the entire company.

Charles Bockman's *Nocturne* (Debussy) opened the first of the two programmes. In the June issue of BALLET TODAY this ballet was compared to Todd Bolender's *The Still Point*. Since I last saw it the girls' roles have been raised to toe, which further enhances a fine ballet. As the lonely couple who at first pass each other by and later meet, Kenneth Johnson and Jane Bockman gave performances which I must class with the best dramatic dancing I have seen.

Also on the first programme was a lively pas de deux with Spanish flavour which Dom Orejudos had arranged for Bonnie Black and himself to music by Albeniz.

At the end of May, the Metropolitan Opera of New York City visited Chicago's Civic Opera House for several performances. The balletic highlight of this brief season was to have been *La Perichole*, an opera bouffe by Julius Burger freely adapted from Offenbach. But the choreography by Zachary Solov was so banal and the corps de ballet so sloppy that it took all the talent of the charming ballerina Mary Ellen Moylan to save the dance scenes from complete disaster.

In June, an evening of Hungarian performers who had escaped their homeland during the recent uprisings was presented at the University of Chicago's Mandel Hall. Included were a group of well trained boy and girl scout folk dancers and two ballet soloists from Budapest, Gyorgy Tatar and Kato Patocs. The ballet couple appeared in a short piece depicting the stages of the Budapest uprising which Mr. Tatar had choreographed to music by Liszt. The style of the choreography was "heroic plastic" which Soviet ballet choreographers had developed from Central European modern sources for use in their more realistic spectacles, adding to it virtuoso turns and jumps. These were performed with the flamboyant energy we have come to expect from dancers trained in the Soviet empire, but this energy seemed at odds with the tragic situation.

FERDINAND REYNA FROM PARIS

The International Festival of the Dance took place at Aix-les-Bains from July 20th to August 4th. The following took part: Luisillo's Spanish Ballet, the Swedish group Idla Flickorna, the Ballets of Jean Babilée with Nina Vyroubova, the Polish Ballet Mazowsze and the stars and artists of the ballets of the Opéra and the Opéra Comique from Paris.

However, this year, the International Festival of the Dance at Aix-les-Bains was to have a special importance for two reasons. In the first place from July 30th to August 4th, the First World Congress of Choreographers was held at Aix-les-Bains with 58 delegates representing 16 countries taking part in activities under the leadership of a provisional committee composed of Serge Lifar (France, President) and Boris Kniaseff (Switzerland), Dimitrije Parlic (Jugoslavia), Mme. Ruskaia (Italy) and Mme. Rouzeaud-Menoncin (France) as Vice-Presidents. M. Yves Bonnat, the artist, stage-designer and theatre technician was the general supervisor of the Congress. During their sessions, the Congress discussed several problems concerned with the creation of an international organisation of choreographers. The question of copyright for choreographers and difficulties involved in the adaptation of choreographic works for cinema and television were considered. The Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs de Musique was represented by Marcel Delannoy, the composer, who was sent to the Congress as an observer. The teaching of dancing in the different countries was also discussed together with the necessity for an international teacher's diploma which would have world-wide recognition. The problem of the standardisation of dance notation was on the agenda. A sub-committee of the Congress will meet during the year in Rome at the Académie Nationale de Danse to study a practical solution to this question.

The Congress decided finally before closing, to found an international Society called the Congrès Mondial Permanent des Chorégraphes to protect their moral and material rights and for the study, protection and development of the choreographic art in its theatrical and social aspects.

The steering committee chosen by the Congress elected in their turn its committee composed of:—

Serge Lifar, President d'Honneur.
Dimitrije Parlic, President (Jugoslavia)
Mme. Ruskaia, First Vice-President (Italy)
Victor de Dolenga, Second Vice-President (Chile)
Mme. Manou Rallou, General Secretary (Athens)
Ginette Bastien, Treasurer (France).

The next Congress will meet next year, very probably in Brussels on the occasion of the International Exhibition which is to be held in that capital.

The second innovation of the Festival was the Concours International des Jeunes Chorégraphes open to all choreographers up to the age of 35, from all countries.

A committee of experts, authors, writers, critics, composers and designers under the aegis of the Sous Secretariat aux Beaux Arts, examined before the Concourse the qualifications of each contestant. They selected six:—

Deryk Mendel, Britain,
Marcel Luipart, Germany,
Mary-Jo Weldon, America,
Maryse Desèvres, France,
J. B. Lemoine, France,
Jean Guélis, France.

These six choreographers received a grant to defray expenses involved in the preparations, costumes, travelling, etc. They had at their disposal on August 3rd and 4th, the Théâtre du Casino d'Aix-les-Bains to present their works which were:—

Les Cuisiniers Méchants, theme by Gunther Grass, music by Horst Geldmacher, decors by Valtini. Choreographer Marcel Luipart (Germany).

Epithalame, theme by Deryk Mendel, music by Olivier Messiaen, decors by Imai. Choreographer Deryk Mendel (Britain).

Piano, theme by Mary-Jo Weldon, music by Michel Emer, decors and costumes by Robert Guiny. Choreography Mary-Jo Weldon (America).

Anjou 33-93, theme by André Coffrant and Jean Guélis, music by Yves Claoué, decors and costumes by Jacques Camuratti. Choreographer Jean Guélis (France).

Le Double, theme by Pierre Rhallys, music by Pierick Houdy, decors and costumes by Jean Devilles. Choreographer Jean Bernard Lemoine (France).

Barbe Bleue, theme by François Guillot de Rhode, music by Jean Françaix, decors and costumes by Claude Bleynie, Choreographer Maryse Desèvres (France).

With Jean Cocteau of the Académie Française as President, the adjudicating committee was composed of numerous personalities: Daniel Rops of the Académie Française, Louis Touchagues, the artist, M. Rivet, the librettist, M. Piollet, sculptor, M. E. Vuillermoz, writer and critic, Peter Williams, journalist and critic, together with Ferdinand Reyna, ballet critic, Dhina Magguy, journalist, Maurice Tassart, Lido photographer, etc. The first prize of 300,000 francs was awarded to the British dancer and choreographer Deryk Mendel whose work *Epithalame* was far superior to the other entries by its beauty and the nobility of its conception. Maryse Desèvres received the second prize of 150,000 francs for *Barbe Bleue* which is full of liveliness and broad humour. The third prize went to Jean Guélis for his piece *Anjou* 33.93, a ballet of pleasing fantasy and drollery. This Concourse which is to take place every year at Aix-les-Bains offers to all young choreographers of every country an opportunity to try out their strength and measure their talents.

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BACKSTAGE—(*continued from page 3*)

SWEDEN

A new volume in English in the series of monographs on Swedish cultural subjects issued by the Swedish Institute has just appeared. Entitled *Theatre and Ballet in Sweden*, it contains a section on Swedish ballet dealing with choreographers and dancers from the classic style through "Les Ballets Suédois" and Jean Börlin to today's best known creators: Birgit Cullberg and Birgit Akesson.

TO CHINA

A farewell party was given at the Chinese Embassy for the Ballet Rambert on the eve of their departure for China. Their tour will last two months and take in cities as far apart as Peking, Canton, Shanghai and Hangkow. Approximately forty performances will be given, and a film is to be made of this, the first English Ballet Company to dance in that country.

Ann Horn told me she was very excited at the prospect of seeing China, but naturally felt a little sad at leaving her husband in England. They have just celebrated their first wedding anniversary, and Richard is still studying medicine. However Ann is determined to be able to greet everyone with the Chinese equivalent of "How do you do," and was using this opportunity to practise hard on everyone present who could speak the language.

PAVLOVA FILM

Although it was known that during the lifetime of Anna Pavlova some records of her life and work had been filmed, in 1935 and even some ten years before that, the problem was to find them. Attempts had been made and failed, but Mr. Sadkovitch of the Soviet Film Agency renewed the search, and the result of his persistence is a British made film entitled *The Immortal Swan* which was shown privately at the Russian Embassy this month.

The producer Mr. Edward Nakhimov told us a few of the difficulties encountered in its making. The film was shot in 16 mm., which had to be blown up to 35 mm., and a sound track added. Mr. Robert Clark of the Associated British Film Corporation brought together the various sections of the film, and it was due to him that the reels were preserved when a wartime order decreed that all old films should be destroyed to eliminate fire risks at the studios.

The film has now been presented to the Bolshoi Ballet Library in Moscow, but it is hoped that other copies will be made and that possibly British Ballet-goers will be able to see it here.

Not only does this film show dances not hitherto seen before, such as *Californian Poppy* and *Invitation to the Dance*, but it builds up a charming picture of Pavlova as a person. She is seen happily feeding her swans and birds in the grounds of her house in Hampstead. There is one tiny passage where the only existing recording of her voice can be heard, in which she calls to her swans. There are other shots taken in her many journeys through the forty-four countries in which she danced during her lifetime. Although, as in all old films, the movements are jerky, great care and attention has been put into preserving every tiny available record of this great ballerina. Dame Margot Fonteyn and Miss Beryl Grey were present at the showing.

A. V. COTON at the

Edinburgh Festival

AS the Edinburgh Festival closes the news of the chief events for the succeeding year are announced: positively in the nick of time, the organisers announced on September 6th that next year would see the presentation of an entire new repertoire of ballets by a large group of known choreographers. For the first time, Ballet is being taken seriously enough to have prompted the Festival Society to give it top place of honour for 1958.

1957 had—let's not be nice-minded about it—reached the dregs: meaning, not that the bad dance performances were due merely to bad dancers, but to the almost total lack of any sensible planning in the choice of companies, or their repertoires, or the staging arrangements at the Empire Theatre. The companies (Royal Swedish Ballet, Ballets Africains, De Cuevas Ballet) have each a different sort of appeal but like other professional theatre companies they can only make effective performances if they are giving the most suitable ballets under the most suitable circumstances.

SWEDISH ROYAL BALLET

The Swedish company was making its first British visit and one hopes that someone in a position of authority in Stockholm is, at this moment, asking awkward questions of those who were responsible for putting the company in the awkward position it found itself in at Edinburgh. Its repertoire for one week was quite unsuitable; too difficult to stage well, too much filled with works that a non-Swedish audience would have difficulty in appreciating. Three big ballets (*Giselle*, *Miss Julie*, *Cupid out of his humour*) were, in their separate ways, startlingly novel and any one of them—if perfectly performed—would have been enough of a balletic sensation on a first visit to a strange country. Having three headache-sized problems to deal with, the company managed only to botch very nearly every part of each of these ballets—either the lighting, the decor, the music or the dancing was insufficiently rehearsed, and as a result not one of them got a first-class performance. *Miss Julie* did best because the company has danced it most often, and these principals know how to give it sensational interpretation under any circumstances; despite an unhappy looking corps-de-ballet, Elsa Marianne von Rosen and Willy Sandberg made something truly remarkable of the characters of Julie and Jean each time they danced. *Giselle*, although the principal roles of Miss von Rosen, Bjorn Holmgren and Loulou Portefaix (as Giselle, Albrecht, Myrtha) were clearly if unsensationally interpreted, gained nothing from its extra 20 minutes-worth of score. The new "numbers" and the extra length of certain mime scenes only served to drag out the story without adding any acceptable choreographic sensations.

The company is good on its home ground in Stockholm, but certain parts of the Swedish temperament do not respond easily to the challenge of a foreign environment—besides this, the company has for some years been undergoing a period of re-shaping and re-organising, and is not yet on a firm enough basis to be able to rise to the continuous difficulties that are met with when touring in strange lands.

BALLETS AFRICAINS

The Ballets Africains is the same troupe that visited London last year and with nearly the same repertoire it shows a picture of how native life in French Equatorial Africa is remarkably tied up with music and dancing. The style of dancing is too limited to permit much variation of choreography and the continuous demonstration of masculine virility is not quite enough to make a new theatre dance sensation for a European audience: perfect for half-an-hour, these vignettes of African life began to be a little too much of a good thing for a two-and-a-half hour programme.

DE CUEVAS BALLET

The De Cuevas Ballet has nearly everything an interesting ballet company should have—except the most important item, which is *artistic direction*. Good dancers, some good ballets, a very able conductor, but however hard the individuals try, a really first-class performance doesn't emerge unless the whole thing is under the relentless eye of a trained artistic supervisor. Ana Ricarda's *Song of Unending Sorrow* is another European's unsuccessful attempt to reveal the unfathomable mentality of the Chinese in the great period of their pre-Christian civilisation. The story is good enough but the choreography is unimaginative, mingling classical and pseudo-Chinese ideas, making the whole thing look like what we may call an "egg-head's *Aladdin*."

Some of the best novelties of choreography were seen in the drill routines and horse-riding exercises forming parts of the Military Tattoo; these, and some stunning Polynesian folk-dances in the Italian film, *Il Ultimo Paradiso* provided some of most rewarding dance spectacles on view at this year's Edinburgh Festival.

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LONDON BALLET MONTH

By

FERNAU HALL

FONTEYN'S GISELLE

IT was a fascinating experience to see Margot Fonteyn dance Giselle at Covent Garden only a few days after seeing the film of the Bolshoi version of this ballet, with Ulanova in the title role. Though the film was imperfect in a number of ways, it brought back memories of that golden evening a year ago with Proustian vividness, and gave an extra dimension to the perception of Fonteyn at her greatest. Make no mistake: this was Fonteyn's best Giselle yet, and an unforgettable experience. She has made certain changes in her interpretation: it would be a bold man who would trace an influence of Ulanova in these changes, but there is no doubt about the stimulus which one supreme artist receives from seeing another supreme artist tackling the same problems. At this level of artistry it is impossible to say which of the two interpretations is best; both the English and the Russian *Giselle* are entirely satisfying and perfect, each in its own way.

Fonteyn's "mad" scene was even richer and more dramatic than before: like Ulanova, she finds an enormous amount to do at time when other Giselles are walking aimlessly around the stage. I was happy to see her, at the moment of death, putting her two hands over her face in the gesture indicating "shroud"—an alternative sign for death which Karsavina teaches in her mime classes. (Perhaps we may here see the influence of Karsavina, who has helped Fonteyn enormously.) When Fonteyn performs in a mad way the pas de deux Giselle associates with her love for Albrecht, she now makes the rhythm less staccato than before: I miss the poignancy of the old interpretation, but I must admit that the new interpretation is admirably suited to the more lyrical atmosphere Fonteyn creates at this point.

To my mind there was only one criticism one might have made in the past of Fonteyn's Giselle: it was in almost every way perfect and deeply moving, an Everest in the present-day ballet world—but her dancing in Act II was so vital, so full of emotion, that it was hard to believe in her as a ghostly Wili. In her latest performance at the Garden Fonteyn brought her interpretation of Act II fully into line with tradition: Giselle's love for Albrecht shone as strongly as ever, but it shone with a silvery and unearthly quality that made it more poignant than ever.

AND LA PERI

Two days previously Fonteyn was to be seen in *La Péri*, re-staged with new decor by André Levasseur and a curious tail added to Fonteyn's costume. The latter was a great mistake: was someone worried that the original costume was too daring? In fact the tail suggested the Folies Bergères and spoiled the line of the dancing. The new decor represented a very unhappy attempt at combining constructivism and symbolism: the ramps with their metal scaffolding made one expect Iskender to start wheeling a Persian wheelbarrow at any moment, while the trailing ropes suggested the *Cutty Sark*. It was all very confusing.

BERIOSOVA'S CHECKMATE

After some years in which Beriosova became thinner and thinner but showed relatively little artistic development, she has now made a major break-through, and is really convincing in dramatic roles. As the Black Queen in *Checkmate*, she is no longer sweet adorable Svetlana doing her best against heavy odds: she really gets inside the role, and make every detail of movement and facial expression sinister. Bravo! And try not to get too tired during those dreary months on the company train: we want you back all in one piece.

MARYON LANE

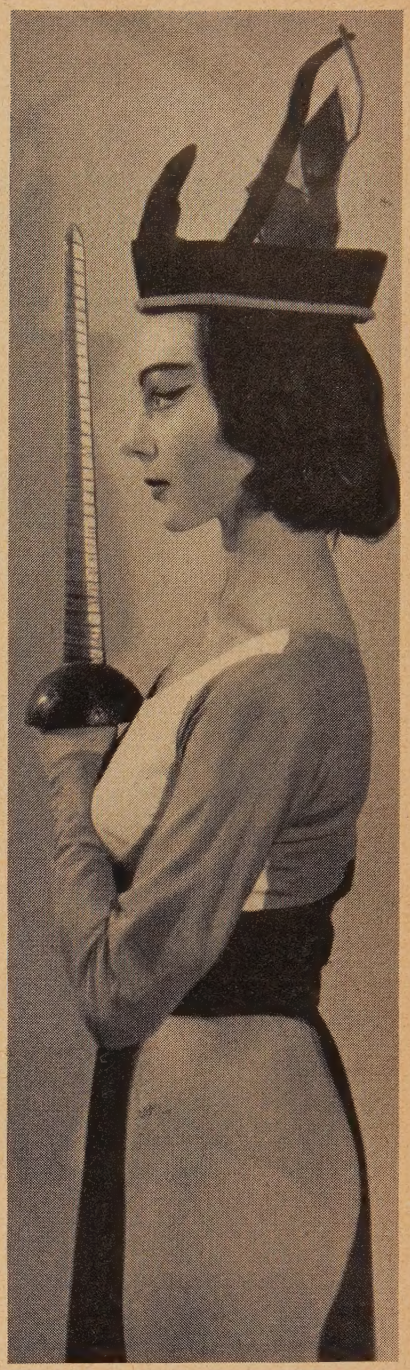
Another artist who gave me great pleasure was Maryon Lane, now one of the finest dancers to be seen on any stage. Her phrasing is a never-failing delight: in the Peasant pas de deux in *Giselle*, for example, she steals time from one phrase to build up a climax in a way which very few dancers could copy—much less invent. Her line is always flawless her sense of style is amazing in one so young and she puts the same sort of élan and joie de vivre into her work as the best of the young male Bolshoi dancers. I only wish some of this remarkable artist's musicality would rub off on some of the other Royal Ballet danseuses: Anya Linden, in particular still wanders off the beat a good deal.

FESTIVAL BALLET

The Festival Ballet clearly was breaking box-office records during its summer season at the Festival Hall: over and over again seats were sold out, and even the Press representative had to stand.

At the gala performance in honour of the company's eighth anniversary we were entertained with no less than five ballets. One novelty was *Annabel Lee*, a short ballet with sung accompaniment choreographed by George Skibine and performed by guest artists Maria Tallchief and George Skibine. It was delightful to see these two fine dancers again though it would have been even more delightful to see them tackling choreography which made some real demands on their interpretative ability. What is one to make of a modern ballet in which the hero expresses his anguish at the death of his beloved by means of four standard outward pirouettes (foot on knee) one inward pirouette, and a *double tour en l'air*? Come, come, Mr. Skibine: you can do better than that. Couldn't you at least vary the outward pirouettes by starting some of them from 5th position instead of 2nd position?

Another novelty was *Variations for Four*, an abstract item arranged by Anton Dolin for four male dancers. It was a very good idea to display the company's strength in male dancers, though one might have hoped for something a little less conventional: in fact we saw four men in turn, each performing the spectacular steps which are usually considered male property. (The fact that men have to master the whole range of the classical technique except pointe-work is curiously neglected by choreographers.)



Svetlana Beriosova as The Black Queen in Checkmate. *Photo: Tahir Khan*

The gala also included one half of *Concerti*, another novelty this season. This is an abstract ballet with choreography by Lichine rather after the manner of Balanchine's *Serenade*, with occasional passages of dramatic acting which have no relationship to any connected story. The best section in the first half (to music by Marcello) was the slow movement, a pas de deux in which Marilyn Burr was supported by Michael Hogan. As rarely happens in an abstract ballet, the choreographer showed a feeling for the phrasing of the music, even though he showed no sense at all of its period quality.

(*Continued on page 15*)

Come Dance With Me

The Romantic Story of Dame Ninette de Valois

A little Irish girl, shocked out of her normal shyness by the "fancy dancing" at a children's party, advanced to the centre of the room, instructed the pianist, and performed, to the astonishment of the grown-ups, an Irish jig taught her by a peasant woman.

It all seemed natural enough to Ninette de Valois. And it was that Irish jig which led her to the unique position she now occupies in the story of ballet in Great Britain.

Dame Ninette has just written her autobiography—a story all ballet-lovers will want to read. It is being serialised, beginning on September 29, exclusively in

THE SUNDAY TIMES

One of the World's Great Newspapers

BALLET RAMBERT

SONIA ROBERTS TALKS TO MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY ON THE EVE OF THEIR DEPARTURE FOR THE CHINESE TOUR

AT first glance, Ballet Rambert seems pitifully unable to fulfil its present role as an emissary proclaiming the vitality of the art of the Western World to the Communist Chinese. It would seem a dangerous precedent to send behind the iron curtain a tiny company, struggling unsuccessfully against a growing tide of financial instability, able to produce only pint-sized versions of the great Maryinsky classics, and far from conjuring with world known names, starring dancers drawn from the ranks of its own former corps de ballet. Yet such a crude assessment reckons entirely without the miracle of Marie Rambert, the artistic director who far from regretting or bemoaning the hazards of unkind circumstances, has turned them to positive advantage and made her company one of the proudest possessions of British Ballet and one of the finest advertisements for private enterprise the free world can show.

Inspiration is her stock-in-trade, or as one of her own dancers explains it, "Technically, we cannot claim to be one of the world's greatest companies, and if you judge status by size of salary, well, I suppose most of us would be better off working on the underground railway—but joining Madame Rambert means far more than gymnastic brilliance or a bulging pay packet—she is unique as a teacher and a director, because if she believes in you—she has the power to turn you into a great artist."

Rambert's rules may be strict but their enforcement is primarily by strength of personality. Another dancer told me that when she came to the company she thought *Giselle* was a 'rather over-rated work.' Now it is her favourite ballet. "You see," said the dancer, "Madame loves the ballet so much, that you cannot help loving it too."

"I look upon Giselle as a very sweet but very simple person" explained ballerina Ann Horn. "All her life, she has been petted and adored, after all everyone in the village loves her, and so when Albrecht betrays her she is utterly lost, and unable to cope because she has never experienced such a situation before." Ann Horn got her first opportunity to dance this leading role at the Barnstaple Festival last year, when Beryl Goldwyn hurt her foot and was unable to dance. However Ann was keen to emphasise that hard work is much more important than a lucky break in the Rambert ballet, and she recalls, how when she joined the company as a corps de ballet dancer she found that she was expected to study not only her own but the leading roles as well. "My first impression of the company, was that it was all work, work and nothing but work. However, now I realise that studying a ballet from the point of view of each character in turn, gives you an understanding and a sense of unity, that would be impossible to gain in a larger group where you work on only one role."

Ann Horn began dancing when she was 2½, as a cure for shyness. However, after a whole term at the dancing school, she was still so shy that she always refused to go into the centre of the room with the other children. It was only when her mother threatened to take her dancing shoes from her that Ann decided sociability was best. "I am told that I spent about three minutes in the middle of the room with the others before retreating to my corner again, but my mother was satisfied that I had made the effort and so she allowed my lessons to continue." It was not until she was twelve that Ann became a full time dancing pupil, before that she was educated at Wimbledon High School, where one of her favourite lessons was geography. "Whenever I looked at a map I was fascinated by the name Omsk, and so of course I am delighted to learn that it is on the itinerary for our Chinese tour" she explained. Ann loves touring and last year stayed on in Spain after the company had left to get better acquainted with the place. "Usually on ballet tours, one is so busy that it is impossible to see anything of the surrounding country. However, I shall be taking my ciné camera to China. I am really looking forward to the trip and my only regret is that my husband is unable to come along with us". Ann's husband is a doctor and at present engaged on his National Service. Ann Horn's most exciting experience on tour was in Spain last year when the company performed *Giselle* in the open air. "Somehow real trees seem the perfect setting for this ballet" she said. Although she does not consider herself superstitious by stage standards, there is one lucky mascot that will be travelling to China as a most essential part of Ann Horn's luggage, that is a small doll dressed as Giselle.

From Giselle to Albrecht, and dancing this role will be Norman Dixon. He has strong views about the way the role should be interpreted, for like his ballerina he has come up the hard way, through the corps de ballet and thus covered all the less attractive roles before achieving the leading one. "I do not believe that Albrecht is a cad" exclaims Dixon. "I do think however, he does not fully realise his love for Giselle until after her death." Norman Dixon's favourite roles are always those in which he can get to grips with the psychological problems of the character he is portraying. He therefore has a great fondness for the Tudor ballets and in particular *Dark Elegies*. Because of his desire to get really to the root of each role, he likes to come to the theatre really early, in order to give himself a little time to 'think himself into a role' before the commencement of the performance. "I never speak to anyone in the dressing room" he confesses. Also, before undertaking a new role Norman Dixon likes to read all the available data on the subject. "Not so much actual notices or descriptions of other peoples' performances, but any material which helps me to establish the style and period background of the ballet" is what he seeks. He likes to see other companies in action, and does not hesitate to use the word fabulous in conjunction with the recent visit of the Bolshoi ballet. The factor which most impressed him, was the Russian use of the more mature artist for the older roles—"so often in Britain we are forced to use the youngest artists in the company for such roles as Hilarion and Berthe."

Norman Dixon rates faithfulness to the spirit of the composer one of the corner stones of successful choreography, but says that if he ever has to leave the theatre in the sense of being an actual performer he feels that he would find the greatest satisfaction in teaching.

Norman was born in Northamptonshire, he started dancing in Burton-on-Trent and came to London to join Madame Rambert on her return from the Australian tour of 1948-49.

It was while she was in Australia that Madame Rambert auditioned a young dancer from Perth—Patricia Dyer. Dyer later became a member of the Australian Borovansky ballet, and two and a half years ago came to London to join Rambert. Fair-haired Patricia is already a leading dancer. Another artist finding fame far from home is Jan Metsis. This Greek dancer, was formerly a member of the Greek National Theatre and performed in the ballets connected with the

continued on page 10

Photo above: *Members of the Ballet Rambert are seen discussing the route they will take on their tour of China with Mr. Hu, Second Secretary of the Chinese Legation.* (*left, Patricia Dyer in the peasant pas de deux*), (*middle, Ann Horn as Giselle*), (*right, Gillian Martlew as the Duchesse Bathilde*). Photo by courtesy of Courtaulds Ltd. who presented fabrics for the costumes.

Ballet Today's Special Feature Writer

ELISABETHE CORATHIEL

went to Paris this month to interview

YVETTE CHAUVIRÉ

Prima Ballerina of the Paris Opéra Ballet

"I asked Madame Chauviré to let me have a complete list of the rôles she has danced through the years, and was pleasantly surprised some days later to receive a very comprehensive list in chronological order. Dancers are not, as a rule, very business-like in these matters, and it was quite refreshing to realise the painstaking seriousness with which Madame Chauviré treated her side of the arrangement especially as she had been obliged to fit a breakneck journey to Geneva into the interval, fulfilling a "Guest" contract, and a special appearance at Aix-les-Bain in connection with the International Dance Congress.

"But this courtesy is typical of Madame Chauviré, and reflects her tidy mind and the intense earnestness she brings to everything she undertakes.

"When I arrived at the Paris Opéra, it was Monsieur Serge Lifar who made the introduction. "Meet our Star'", he said breezily—and we very soon compared notes, discovering that we had already met once before in a dressing room at Covent Garden.

"But what a different meeting-place was this one in Paris! Monsieur Lifar's office is not a very big one, and has none of the trappings of V.I.P.-ship! Madame Chauviré herself led me through a labyrinth of bare-floored passages to a service lift which, with a temperament all of its own, decided to rush past the door at which we stood five or six times before it finally condescended to take us on board. When it did, we were whisked to the upper regions along with a party of humble but matey back-stage workers. Another long, bare passage, then a very ordinary-looking door which Mme. Chauviré opened with her own key—and what a surprise awaited me! This was her 'loge', her own private retiring-room. And this indeed had all the trappings of stardom!

"A dream apartment of primrose walls and big flattering windows. The looped pelmets were deep violet; the silken curtains pale parma. An exquisite, valanced dressing-table was 'dressed' en suite. The long divan in one corner had a frilled cover, also in violet, and on it a quilted over-lay of flower-sprigged primrose silk. The carpet was in soft pastel grey, and the light, delicate chairs toned perfectly with the ensemble.

Unlike many star dressing rooms I have known it was not cluttered up with rapidly-wilting flowers. Instead, the dainty walls were hung with water colours of Yvette's own painting, delicate flower and garden studies; and, most intriguing of all, some exquisite little modern compositions formed entirely of sea-shells and skeletons of insects, collected and assembled by her own hands. Even if I had not known that Mme. Chauviré was an artist, the very choice of these pictures would scarcely have failed to hold attention; and it was quite thrilling to know that she had herself produced them.

"All her leanings are artistic. At home, she takes great pride in her conservatory and likes to attend personally to her collection of exotics, whenever time permits. Using gloves to protect her expressive hands, she does not shirk the rougher work; as with everything else she takes her gardening seriously!

"Her domestic life is supremely happy. Married to a fellow artist who is equally supreme in his own line, they share the common interest of painting; her husband often designs sets for Yvette's ballets, and he is in great demand as a scenic and costume designer for other theatres, so it is not merely a wife-inspired hobby. Having the same work and the same interests, they understand one another perfectly, and contrive to make a graceful pattern of life although their professional activities often involve trying separations.

Mme. Chauviré told me how much she enjoyed dancing in Britain; her last visit to London was in 1954. "It is," she says, "a joy to dance to British audiences, who love ballet". During her extensive travels she has found that the Americans are very enthusiastic, the Italians appreciative but much more reserved, in Spain and Stockholm audiences are delirious about ballet, and in Switzerland too they are very appreciative.

Her first important role was in the ballet *Les Créatures de Promethée* in 1937, when she danced the part created by Spessivtseva, and she remained at the Paris Opéra until 1945 when she accompanied the Opéra Ballet on their tour of the United States.

Another of her tours, this time with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, took her to North America. She also danced in London with Festival ballet, and toured Milan, Rome, and Florence, besides making personal guest visits to Stockholm, Holland, Denmark, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Spain, Rio de Janeiro and Canada.

Her favourites ballets are *Giselle, Les Mirages, Istar, L'Ecuyère, La Péri, Nauteos,* etc. She has no favourite partner, but has enjoyed dancing with Anton Dolin, Michel Renault, Oleg Tupin, Algaroff, John Gilpin, and Freddy Franklin.

When she has a little free time, which is not often, she loves wandering around Paris, her native town, poking about in antique shops, going to concerts, and painting. Although she likes cooking she has no time in her very busy life to develop domestic virtues. She is very fond of the country and animals, and her favourite books are travel stories.

BALLET RAMBERT—(*Continued from previous page*)

opera in Athens. He has been with the company seven and a half months.

British born soloist Gillian Martlew comes from Ashburn, Derbyshire. She started dancing at the Kingslocumbe School of Dancing in Cambridge, joining the Rambert School in September, 1949. A year later she became a fully fledged member of the company. She has a particularly wide range as a dancer, covering characterizations as different as Lola Montez, Bathilde and the Milanese ballerina in *Gala Performance.*

Diminutive Patricia Ashworth's original reason for taking up dancing, was that of health. Doctors thought that the exercise would strengthen her after a long illness. She was then twelve. Born in Manchester, Ashworth's early tuition came from the Muriel Suffield Tweedy School. She also had a short period at the Sadler's Wells School. She is a dancer who strongly believes that technique and artistry are qualities which should be developed hand in hand, rather than the former first and the latter only after mastery of the former has been achieved. As Patricia herself put it, "I come from a non-theatrical family, when my mother comes to see me dance, she has very little idea whether my movements are technically correct, she depends on seeing emotions, in the form of expression of face and body take shape, to know what the ballet is about."

Patricia has two unusual hobbies, she is an enthusiastic reader and her choice of subjects are the lives of the saints. The other pastime is collecting antique jewellery. In private life she is Mrs. Ronald Yerrell. Yerrell is a former member of Ballet Rambert, and recently choreographed a ballet, *The Mirror,* for the company. Patricia found the experience of having her husband directing her professional activities a disquieting one. "We take opposite views about so many things that I found it hard to refrain from arguing with him about the way the ballet should go" she confesses. However, Patricia's favourite role is in a modern work, she most enjoys Pierrot's daughter, in *Laiderette.*

Two other disciples of the more modern forms of ballet, and Martha Graham fans into the bargain, are John Chesworth and Norman Morrice. These two dancers, bitterly regret that prominent artists in other mediums, no longer take the interest in the ballet, that was common in the days of Diaghilev. The reason they admire Martha Graham is that they feel her company is one of the few really experimental choreographic workshops that remain.

"I suppose that we boys have stronger opinions about our work," said Morrice, "because the choice of job is almost invariably our own. We come to the ballet, often in face of strong parental opposition, whereas many girls are put on the stage to vicariously satisfy the ambitions of their mothers. When they grow up and want to do something different, they still have to stick to dancing because it is the only trade they know, or because they cannot afford to waste the time and money spent on their training. Boys generally enter the profession later in

(*Continued on page 20*)

Yvette Chauviré in La Mort du Cygne. *Photo: Houston Rogers.*

From 1937

With the Paris Opéra
1937
David Triomphant
Les Créatures de Promethée
Queen of the Wilis (in *Giselle*)
Alexander the Great
All the Divertissements for the operas:
Faust, *Thaïs*, *Romeo and Juliet*, etc.
1939
Le Spectre de la Rose
1940
Les Deux Pigeons (role of the Bohemian)
1941
Sylvia
Chevalier et la Demoiselle (role of the Dame Noble)
1942
Istar
(it was this role which earned Chauviré the title of "étoile")
Juan de Zarissa
Suite en Blanc
1944/1945
Le Lac des Cygnes
Giselle (first danced in 1944)
Coppelia
In 1945 Yvette Chauviré left the Paris Opéra
Film (in 1937)—*La Mort du Cygne*
By Jean Benoit-Lévy
with Mia Slavinska and Jeannine Charrat

1946/1947
In Monte Carlo, England, Italy with the Ballet de Monte Carlo
Drama Per Musica
Noir et Blanc
Chota Rustanelli
Nauteos
September 1947 returned to the Paris Opéra .
Revival of *Chevalier et la Demoiselle* and
Divertissement
Creation of *Les Mirages*
1948/1949
Left for North America and Canada with the Opéra Ballet
L'Ecuyère was created in 1948
This tour and another long tour in 1949 were a great success.
1950
L'Oiseau de Feu (at the Scala Milan)
Le Lac des Cygnes

Photos (*l. to r.*)
With Michel Renault in La Belle Hélène. *Photo: Studio Lipnitzki.*
In Nauteos. *Photo: Houston Rogers.*
In Concerto. *Photo: Studio Lipnitzki.*

To 1957

1951
Again a tour of North America, Canada and in England
Mme. Chauviré danced
Casse Noisette
Giselle
and *Petrouchka* (with Anton Dolin)
May 1951, in Florence: *Romeo and Juliet*
(choreographed by Mme. Chauviré)
Bartok's *Mystère*
Nocturne
At La Scala, Milan, Yvette Chauviré entirely re-presented *Giselle*, in which she danced with Peruggini, La Scala's premier danseur

1952
North America for four months with the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo
During this same year she also danced in several ballets from her personal repertoire at the Marigny Theatre in Paris.

1953/1954
At the Rome Opera House in Massine's ballet *Zephyre et Flore*
She also made a film in Rome: *Le Carrousel Fantastique Napolitain* (with the co-operation of the Ballet de Cuevas)

July 1953 saw Yvette Chauviré's return to the **Paris Opéra**
dancing all the roles in her repertoire,
(under the direction of Maurice Lehmann)
Le Cygne by Saint-Saens (in 1954) choreography
also by Yvette Chauviré
At Enghien the same year she created *Rondo Capricioso*
by Saint-Saens (pas de deux with Van Dijk)
Then came an official London tour by the Paris Opéra Ballet in exchange for a visit of the Sadler's Wells Ballet in Paris

1955
In Cranko's *La Belle Hélène*, and a revival of *Nauteos* with new decors by Yves Brayer
At the Vichy Festival of French Music—revival of *La Péri*, with new choreography by Yvette Chauviré
with the co-operation of the Ballet de Strasbourg, playing in Vichy

1956
At the Municipal Theatre in Rio, Brazil
Giselle
Romeo and Juliet
Le Lac des Cygnes
Pas de Deux Classique
Le Cygne
La Symphonie No. 5 Tchaikovsky
At the Paris Opéra during this year she created Bartok's *Concerto*

1957
At Enghien she created *L'Indécise* and *Concerto pour Harpe et Orchestre*

Serge Golovine and Nina Vyroubova in Ana Ricarda's Song of Unending Sorrow (*La Chanson de l'Eternelle Tristesse*).

HOW A BALLET IS BORN

ANA RICARDA

SPECIAL BALLET TODAY INTERVIEW

★

ALTHOUGH it is literally true that Ana Ricarda was influenced in her decision to create *Song of Unending Sorrow* by the accidental falling of a volume of Chinese poems on her head in a Foyle's bookshop, she is far from desiring to make a "stunt" of this story. Indeed the new ballet, which is the outstanding event of the Marquis de Cuevas' contribution to the Edinburgh Festival this year, started from an idea that has been germinating in her mind throughout almost the whole of her professional life.

American born, of Scotch-Irish-Spanish extraction, Ana was fortunate in having parents who believed in the educational value of travel. Several tours to many parts of the world landed her eventually in London, where she received her early private training from the celebrated Nicholas Legat and Pierre Vladimiroff.

On this basis of sound technique she soon began to build, using her travel experiences and the inborn dramatic instincts handed down to her from a long line of ancestors in Scotland, Ireland and Spain. Her sense of theatre showed early signs of development and found expression both in her character-work and choreography. She feels that British ballet to-day, admirable as it is universally admitted to be, could still do with a strong injection of really experienced demi-character dancers.

Very early in life she became interested in the more intellectual side of dance creation, and took steps to supplement her technical equipment by an organised course of study at the New York Metropolitan Museum. There she soon became aware of a powerful influence at work in the Far Eastern Section. Its curator, Alan Priest, had just mounted a sensational exhibition, in which the museum's exceptionally fine assortment of national costumes and accessories, tracing China's cultural development back to earliest times, were most ingeniously and effectively displayed. Not content merely to hang the dresses in such a way that they could be minutely viewed, Professor Priest actually made crystal skeletons to go inside them, reproducing characteristic attitudes and gestures. This so impressed the young ballerina that she conceived a veneration for the Tang Dynasty—which lasted roughly from A.D. 600 to 900—and for the somewhat aloof Curator who had made her appreciation possible. This, she tells me, was the actual birth of the Tang-Ming-Huan ballet idea.

Many poems—the first of them by a contemporary poet, Li-Po—have been written round the fabulous Emperor, once the idol of his subjects, who sacrificed his reputation to the fascinating concubine, Yang-Kuei-Fei, and, when popular indignation made her death imperative, never ceased to mourn her. Hence the ballet's title.

After the bookshop incident, Miss Ricarda took the task of creating it seriously in hand. I asked her if she had any definite rule for developing ballets from history.

"Only one," she replied. "Absorb the subject, soak yourself in its atmosphere. Then forget it. Finally, start all over again."

The process of absorbing data led her back again to the New York Metropolitan, where she sought out her old idol, Alan Priest. It was not easy to broach this quiet, reserved man, full of endearing professorial mannerisms and living in a dream-world of his own. He habitually uses two pairs of spectacles, which are suspended by strings from his neck. When wanted, the right pair rarely comes immediately to hand, so there is usually a good deal of fumbling and confusion. It all takes time. Ana expected no very cordial reception to her endeavour to "pump" the Curator for further information on the Tang Dynasty. To her surprise, he not only patiently heard her out, but having pondered for a moment, dived into the bottom drawer of his desk and unearthed an ancient, dog-eared manuscript. It was a draft in his own hand-writing of a script he had prepared many years before, to please a minor operatic composer who had wanted to use the love-lorn Emperor's tragic story as the basis for a ballet libretto!

Many years of study and research into Chinese and Korean music, dance and gesture followed. Ana did a great deal of work on her own account, but she also worked in close co-operation with the artist, Toni Stubbing, who is responsible for the costumes and decor. In Paris, where both have their headquarters, they met continually, comparing notes and developing plans. Indeed the ballet is a classical example of collaboration between the choreographer, the designer and the composer, another Englishman, Christopher Headington. It occurred to me to ask, "What has Korea to do with it?", Miss Ricarda explained that the costumes of the Tang period had much in common with native dress worn in Korea to-day; indeed, many of the quite ancient characteristics of the Chinese people have been preserved down the ages in that part of the world, and the study of Korean costume, as well as ancient Korean Court dances and music, was therefore a necessary preliminary to the development of *Song of Unending Sorrow*.

In the opportunities it gives for acting, as well as dancing, this ballet is a worthy successor to the long line of other character-works Miss Ricarda has created, including *Dona Inez de Castro*, *Del Amor y de la Muerte*, *La Tertulia*, *Saeta*, and *Diasorei*.

LONDON BALLET MONTH (*Continued from page 7*)

Marilyn Burr is a very good-looking girl with regular features and long slender legs; she has real talent, but she needs to study Fonteyn's performance in *Symphonic Variations* to see what phrasing means.

In the second half of *Concerti* (to music by Vivaldi) Lichine made a serious attempt to represent the counterpoint of the music with soloists and groups dancing independently to the different voices in the score. It was natural enough for him to take this path, pioneered by Massine in the thirties in a series of symphonic ballets in which Lichine danced, and I think this line of development offers many possibilities. Lichine's visual counterpoint was rather unimaginative, but it was significant that these contrapuntal sections of the ballet gave more sense of inevitability than the others.

THE SPANISH COMPANIES

During August we had two Spanish companies performing simultaneously in London—indicating very clearly the intense popularity of this style. Though the company appearing at the Sadler's Wells Theatre was formed by two male dancers (Roberto Ximenez and Manolo Vargas) who broke away from the Pilar Lopez company appearing at the Palace, the two companies differed to a fantastic extent.

The general impression created by the Pilar Lopez company was one of tasteless monotony. The setting were unpleasant, the lighting incompetent, and the choreography unimaginative. In the adaptation of Spanish folk-dances to the stage Antonio has given a very clear lead, bringing together steps from various dances in one region to build something which is both theatrical and in its own way authentic: but Pilar Lopez gave no sign that she had learned anything from him. Lack of taste was particularly apparent in the Basque items, where she had a girl perform male steps while wearing a skirt that flew high in the air; if a girl must perform a masculine Basque dance, she should wear trousers—just as a gypsy girl does when she performs a male Flamenco dance. On the other hand the company included some of the finest male gypsy dancers to be seen in London for a long time, and on the few occasions when they were given a chance they stopped the show with Flamenco solos. These lean, and hawk-faced young dancers contrasted very oddly with the women of the company, most of whom had thick waists and seemed unable to bend back with the supple grace characteristic of Andalusian and Flamenco dancing.

The Ximenez-Vargas company, by contrast, maintained a consistently high standard of intelligence in its staging, casting and choreography, and it has as its female star an incredible creature called Ana Mercedes—a tall, exotically beautiful girl with a ravishing figure, who began the programme as a splendid Flamenco singer and then developed into a compelling Flamenco dancer: I almost expected her to pick up a guitar and ravish us with her playing as well. The two Mexican stars of the company, Ximenez and Vargas, looked magnificently stern with their Aztec profiles, but it was a pity that they did not provide us with more and better Latin-American dances: the solitary Mexican dance (*Munecos Mexicanos*) was quite lacking in character. On the other hand one admirable Argentine gaucho dance, performed with fiery arrogance by Jose Lopez in boots fitted with jingling spurs, gave an idea of the choreographic riches of Latin-America, and showed what we were missing. The girls in the company, though naturally unable to match the impossible standard set by Ana Mercedes, were all young, svelte and well-trained, and gave a good account of themselves in a variety of styles.

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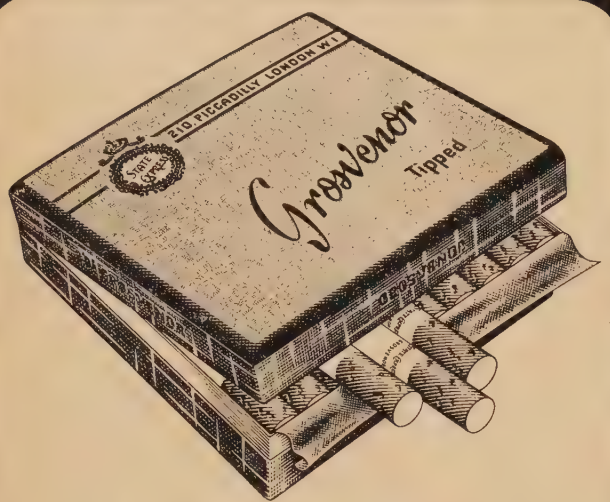

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New Books

Linda Graeme

Reviewed by
PIGEON CROWLE

Helen in Musical Comedy. By Linda Graeme (*Hutchinson*, 8*s.* 6*d.*)

In this sequel the ballet student heroine now finds herself soloist in a popular West End musical. But success has its problems for not only has she to choose between marriage and career, but whether she will forsake the hard way of ballet for the primrose path of musical comedy.

The author, who comes of a literary family—her father and brother are both writers—was once a pupil of Madame Rambert and has been able to draw on her own experience in creating a background of students starting out as professionals and the life of the classroom and the theatre. I am sure all teen-agers interested in ballet and the stage will enjoy this book.

Covent Garden Books, No. 11. (*Ed. Michael Wood Royal Opera House*, 6*s.*)

The latest edition in this series illustrates new productions of the Royal Ballet during the last two years, concentrating on the more recent works. It also includes colour plates of designs for *Birthday Offering*, *The Lady and the Fool*, *Noctambules* and *The Prince of the Pagodas*, as well as many excellent photographs of principals and soloists. Muriel Evans should, of course, read Meriel Evans. There is a list of the full repertoire of the company and several pages devoted to executive personnel.

My Years with Pavlova. By Algeranoff. (*Heinemann*, 25*s.*).

The unceasing tours of Pavlova for over eighteen years have become as legendary as the dancer herself. Travelling all over the world, she took her company wherever people wanted her, and often to places where ballet had never been seen before: inspiring a love for the art and lighting a torch that has burnt brightly ever since. Algeranoff spent the first decade of his ballet career with the Pavlova company, and in describing these restless, varied travels, he tells of the last ten years of Pavlova's life.

English by birth, he had previously danced in musical comedy and acted juvenile parts when, aged eighteen, he asked Pavlova for an audition. Here is his description of the scene at Ivy House:

". . . there was Pavlova herself dressed in a pale pink chiton, tights, and ballet shoes, a light shawl over her bare shoulders, ready to begin her own work when the audition was over. For all her simplicity she looked an other-worldly creature, her black hair parted in the centre and smoothed severely down to a knot at the nape of her neck; her large dark glowing brown eyes and the upturn of the corners of her mouth as she smiled her greeting, combined with the beautiful proportions of her slender body, seemed to give her an elfin quality. Her regal poise made one instantly aware that one was in the presence of a great personage.

On her right sat a fair man, Victor Dandré, her husband, and on her left sat Pianowski, her ballet-master. I had taken some music with me, but there was nobody to play it, and I had to dance without an accompaniment. All the time I felt the intense gaze of Pavlova's dark brown eyes following me as I danced a Russian dance and mercifully finished it without falling down."

Then:

"You know some czardas?" she asked.

"A little Madame," I replied, and danced a few Hungarian steps. Then Pavlova gave me some steps to do. I could not quite understand her, so she explained with her hands, using them with such lightning rapidity that I felt awestruck, rooted to the ground. I would rather have watched her than danced for her, but I endeavoured to follow her instructions."

As a result, he joined the company, eventually becoming a soloist, and partnering Pavlova in several ballets.

I wish there were more word pictures of the great ballerina such as

(*Continued on page 20*)

KEITH BECKETT

KEITH BECKETT was born at Bletchley in Buckinghamshire. (His actual birthday is May 11th). He took his first dancing lesson from Vera Todd, after the family had moved to Wembley but has no very clear idea why he began dancing. By the time he was fourteen, he had been spotted by Grace Cone and awarded a scholarship to the Cone Ripman school. Here, his teachers urged him to study ballet intensively as they felt he had a natural gift for this branch of the theatre. However, Keith himself preferred tap dancing, and wanted to make his career in the straight theatre or on the musical comedy stage. His early training therefore covered all branches of theatrical training.

In 1946 he won the Adeline Genée Medal for dancing thereby confirming the advice of his teachers. Then followed 2½ years National Service in the Army. "By the time I joined up," recalls Beckett, "Ensa was a thing of the past. I tried very hard to get in on army entertainments without success, and so I had to settle for being just another ordinary private—boots and all! Although I lost a little in finish and technique because of the break in my career I quite enjoyed my national service. It was my first opportunity in ten years to meet and talk and live with people whose lives lay outside the theatre. It is all too easy for the dancer whose conditions of work tend to isolate him from other people, to think of himself only as an artist and to forget that he is also an entertainer. You can only understand what the public want from the theatre by meeting them often and mixing freely with people outside the profession. This is particularly true of the character dancer, whose stock in trade is personality and characterisation. The army also enabled me to see Egypt free of charge" added Beckett with a smile.

Off stage it is impossible to ignore Beckett's irrepressible talent for comedy. His zany-near-goon-like humour has caused him to play practical jokes on nearly every member of Festival Ballet and its organizers.

Immediately following his army service, Keith Beckett went into the musicals, *High Button Shoes*, and *Tough at the Top*. In the former he partnered a chorus girl who has since become very famous, her name—Audrey Hepburn. *Tough at the Top* was the last Cochran show and so Keith Beckett found himself face to face with one of the greatest showmen of the century. His impression of Cochran was "He never said very much to the members of the cast—but on the day he came to tell us that the show must close, there were genuine tears in his eyes."

In 1950 Beckett joined Festival Ballet. "It was my first experience of a ballet company and they all seemed so absurdly young after the mixed age groups of a normal stage show. One girl in the company even had a blue ration book and was entitled to extra sweets and bananas."

The next outstanding personality that Beckett encountered was Massine. It was Massine who helped Beckett with the rôle of Petrouchka. This now ranks as Keith Beckett's favourite rôle because "there are so many ways in which you can look at the character. Although it was Massine who inspired my original interpretation," Beckett explained, "I never tried to copy him. I believe it is important to be oneself. I have been very lucky, in that Mr. Dolin has always allowed me freedom to tackle a rôle in the manner I think right. He has never laid down rigid rules that I must do this or not do that. Before I tackled the role of Petrouchka for the first time I drove myself nearly crazy trying to read up all the available data on the subject, and really get to the root of the legend."

"For me the real tragedy of Petrouchka lies in his awareness. He really loves the ballerina but she is too stupid to see it, a fact which Petrouchka realises even as he battles on with his inadequate wooing. No one, in the crowd, among the dolls, or even his own master sees beyond the sawdust exterior of the puppet, but when he dies at the end of the ballet, he triumphs for when the charlatan sees the ghost he knows for the first time that Petrouchka has a soul. The puppet has proved himself to be more than sawdust."

Other rôles which Keith Beckett has created for Festival Ballet, are the Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*, Nish in *Vilia*, and the Hunchback in *Esmeralda*. On the purely classical side he has been included in the company's first performance of *Grieg Concerto* and Lichine's *Concerti*. This year he has added Hilarion to his character gallery of rôles. Keith Beckett's amiable nature has a way of winning through even the most sinister make-up. He is incapable of playing a rôle in

(*contd. on next page*)

Keith Beckett *Photo: Mike Davis*

KEITH BECKETT (*continued from previous page*)

an entirely unsympathetic manner and therefore his Hilarion has a streak of rough jocularity, and one suspects the hiding of the sword to be an uproarious Keith Beckett style prank, to be mirthfully shared by Giselle at the moment of unmasking. This rendering, more logical than the conventional jealous villain, lends an extra twist to the tragedy. The rôle Keith Beckett likes dancing least and the one which he has delightedly renounced is the Chinaman in *Nutcracker*.

In the spring of last year Keith Beckett severed his connection with Festival Ballet. He organized a troupe of girl dancers, and then a trio, in which Petrus Bosman another ex-member of Festival Ballet appeared. The trio's appearances included a season with the Crazy Gang, cabaret and variety.

For Keith Beckett it is an insurmountable tragedy that the ballet and other forms of theatrical entertainment are such separate spheres of endeavour. This was harshly proved to him when he began to branch out on his own. "Although I was a well established artist within Festival Ballet," he explained, "when I left to work in other fields, the attitude of agents and impresarios to whom I explained I was Keith Beckett of Festival Ballet—was 'so what'. They had never heard of me. I had to create a new reputation."

Beckett was just beginning to feel himself successfully established, he had been offered London club engagements and a television series, when the chance to rejoin Festival Ballet occurred.

Although, he had enjoyed being his own boss, the pull of the ballet was strong. He rejoined Festival Ballet in the spring of 1957. However, Keith Beckett has no doubts that he did the right thing in making a temporary break. "I would advise many more dancers to do the same thing" he added, "but unfortunately dancers have to eat, and branching out in a new career, means sacrificing financial security and years of hard work. Yet if there were a greater interchange between the mediums I believe it would be to the advantage of everyone."

Off stage Keith Beckett describes his activities thus, "Like all the boys in Festival Ballet, I am car and camera crazy." His present elegant biscuit colour sports car, is third in a dynasty which began with a decrepit red model that "one day drew up outside the White City and refused ever to go again." On the camera side he has reached the ciné and colour phase.

In the summer of 1953, he married cabaret dancer Diane Monks at Marylebone Registry Office, and in cheerful defiance of superstition the bride wore green.

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New Recordings

Reviewed by BEDFORD CROWLE

THE PRINCE OF THE PAGODAS (*Britten*). *Covent Garden Orchestra* (*Britten*). *Decca LXT*5336-7.

This is a most important issue by Decca as it records the first completely British full length ballet. With the composer at the rostrum, it has authority and he procures some fine playing from the orchestra, which is excellently recorded. These records enable you to appreciate in full the musical and balletic quality of the score and no ballet goer's library would be complete without them. Donald Mitchell's sleeve notes are most helpful. My congratulations to Decca.

SWAN LAKE (*Tchaikovsky*). *Minneapolis S.O.* (*Dorati*). *Mercury MRL*2528-30.

Congratulations are also due to Mercury for giving us complete recordings of the three great Tchaikovsky ballets. Again Dorati brings out the orchestral colouring most strikingly, whetting our interest in the normally omitted items. The only criticism I have of the performance and recording that is worth noting is the exaggerated tempo which, for me, spoilt the pas de deux in the second act, and a brassiness in some of the tutti. Apart from those two points, I recommend to you three discs of most enjoyable listening.

EINE KLEINE NACHTMUSIK (*Mozart*). CONCERTO GROSSO, Op. 6/4 (*Handel*). *Philharmonia Orchestra* (*Klemperer*). *Columbia* 33C1053.

Mozart's entrancing serenade was the foundation of Gsovsky's *Nocturne* for Les Ballets des Champs Elysées and then last summer, in America, both Harry Asmus and Thomas Armour set it to their ballets, *Continuum* and *Pantomime for Lovers*. Together with the Handel, this is undoubtedly a very attractive disc that is well able to hold its own.

HAMLET and THE STORM OVERTURES (*Tchaikovsky*). OVERTURE ON RUSSIAN THEMES (*Balakirev*). *Philharmonia Orchestra* (*Matacic*). *Columbia* 33*CX*1420.

There are so many subtleties in Helpmann's *Hamlet* that, in spite of the frequency with which it was seen, it always held my interest providing he was in the namepart. Here Matacic is strong and vigorous and includes the rarely heard overture to *The Storm*. Balakirev's overture is well worth while hearing and you will recognise the folksong that Stravinsky used for the nursemaids in *Petrushka*. I prefer Irving's conducting of *Hamlet* but nevertheless this is good.

SONATAS NO. 8, PATHETIQUE, and NO. 23 APPASSIONATA (*Beethoven*). *Arthur Rubinstein* (*piano*). RCA.RB16004.

Everyone will agree that here we have an excellent disc of these two well-loved sonatas. Rubinstein's approach is so deeply felt that one forgets what a lifetime of thought and technical concentration has gone into performances such as these. The piano tone is full and round so that I can heartily commend to you this music of William Christensen's ballet, *Sonata Pathétique*.

INTRODUCTION and RONDO CAPRICCIOSO (*Saint-Saëns*). VIOLIN CONCERTO (*Tchaikovsky*). *Michael Rabin* (*violin*). *Philharmonia Orchestra* (*Galliera*). *Columbia* 33CX1422.

Most of us will have seen those two very accomplished artists, Chauviré and van Dijk, on television last summer, when they danced to Lifar's choreography set to Saint-Saëns well known *Rondo*. Rabin gives a first class account of it in all respects which you cannot fail to enjoy. The concerto is good but needs deeper feeling.

PIANO CONCERTO K 414 (*Mozart*). *Benjamin Britten* (*piano*). *Aldeburgh Festival Orchestra*. *Decca* LW5294.

Massine set this delightful concerto to his ballet, *Divertimento*, for the Enghein Festival and of course it has a special interest for those who were at Aldeburgh last year. Britten conducts from the piano in the truly Mozartian manner. Taking into account that it is a "live" performance, I think you will agree it is a worthwhile record depending whether you like applause included or not.

Horowitz' interpretation of Beethoven's "*Moonlight*" *Sonata*, RCA.RB16010, choreographed by Massine for Ballet Theatre and by Fokine for his wife, seems to me to lack inspiration. The same may be said of José Iturbi's on Columbia 33CX1380 though he is much more successful with the two Mozart sonatas K 331 and K 332 on the reverse side. The finale of K 331 is the well known Alla Turca movement with Ted Bollender set to his ballet, *Seraglio*. Arthur Fiedler, I know, has a great following and these three recent discs, which are excellently recorded, of his *Sylphides* and *Graduation Ball* on HMV. CLP1114, *La Boutique Fantasque* suite, *L'Apprenti Sorcier* and Ibert's *Divertissement* on RCA.RD27008 and excerpts from *The Nutcracker* on RCA.RD27010, will no doubt give his admirers a lot of pleasure but I regret to say that I found them a little commonplace.

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,,	21st	,,	*King's Theatre, Edinburgh*
,,	28th	,,	*His Majesty's Theatre, Aberdeen*
,,	4th	Nov.	*King's Theatre, Glasgow*
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BERYL GREY'S TOURS

BERYL GREY has surely qualified to go down to posterity as one of the luckiest ballerinas ever. During her recent Latin-American tour she missed by inches a revolution and an earthquake; lost her music twice—and arrived back on the dot to tell the adventurous tale!

Any tour to South America is bound to involve surprises. Beryl was the first British ballerina to make an extended tour covering seven of these south-continental countries, appearing in several cities never previously visited by an English ballet-star. She had to evolve a technique of travel as she went along, holding herself prepared for all eventualities, not omitting some last-minute changes of programme. Everywhere she met with the warmest possible welcome.

All her dreams of making this a semi-holiday had to be forgotten; there was no time for sight-seeing! Only one joyful trip made a break in the fatiguing round of plane-hops and back-stage adjustments. It was the day Sir Charles Empson, British Ambassador to Chile arranged a party for her from Santiago to the summit of the Andes. They proceeded by powerful cars up the winding mountain roads, then on by jeep to the region of eternal snows, General Montgomery's son acting as driver. All Beryl regretted was that she had left her skis behind in her Swedish holiday home!

There were, of course, other parties in plenty, but these were of the more formal kind, just a part of the business routine. Parties at which the most penetrating questions were asked and had to be sensibly answered. Somehow the South American journalists had got hold of the tag that Beryl would "any day prefer a refrigerator to a new role!" This took her entirely by surprise and needed a lot of explaining away before the newshounds were convinced.

The whole tour however was a triumph for British prestige, and Beryl capped her popularity when, on her second visit to the celebrated Colon Theatre at Buenos Aires (where her first performances were so successful that they begged her to return) she persuaded the stage hands to back her in giving a performance absolutely free of charge to 3,500 of Argentina's poorest children.

Honduras, Venezuela, Sao Paulo, Brazil and Mexico City were other places of call arranged en route. It was while travelling to Mexico that the music got lost. The conductor-accompanist, David Tidboald, rose magnificently to this crisis, and Oleg Briansky throughout was a pillar of strength.

After only three days rest Miss Grey and these two partners proceeded to King's Lynn for the local Festival; then on August 18th they flew on to Johannesburg for the opening of their two months' South African tour, which will cover also Cape Town and Durban.

In November Miss Grey has been invited to dance as guest artist in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev—the first English ballerina to appear in Russia. *Swan Lake* and *Giselle* will be amongst the ballets in which she will dance.

Photo above: On her arrival at the airport Beryl Grey is presented with the Chilean national flower.

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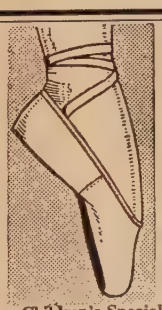

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BALLET RAMBERT—(*Continued from page* 10)

life, so that we form friendships with people in other jobs. We do not lose contact with the outside world and become isolated to the same degree as our feminine counterparts."

The portrait drawn by Norman Morrice exactly fits his friend John Chesworth, who became a theatre addict only when he was doing his R.A.F. service as a wireless mechanic. It was not until he was demobilized that he applied for an audition with Madame Rambert.

"John is the real revolutionary—he has terrific ideas for reform in the theatre (and outside it)" Morrice explained, "but he will be far too modest to tell you about them himself. "In his spare time he manages to be a first-rate photographer and is keenly interested in all forms of sport, in fact, it was only when he became a dancer that he gave up playing rugby."

John Chesworth, confirmed this by stating that in his opinion ballet owes a debt to the younger generation—in that it does not keep pace with external developments in the arts. "Of course the classics are wonderful" he said, "but the fact that they still play Shakespeare in the straight theatre, doesn't mean that they totally ignore 'The Method' but in ballet even musique concrète is regarded as a wildly avant garde experiment instead of a normal part of artistic progression."

It is not surprising that John Chesworth's favourite role is in *Variations on a Theme*, "particularly the more frenzied bits at the end," for this dancer is passionately eager to ventilate through the medium of the ballet the emotional undercurrents and infatuations that disturb the citizens of 1957.

To some it would seem odd for such an attitude to flourish in a company, where so much loving attention is lavished on the preservation of the last living remnant of mid-nineteenth century romanticism, namely *Giselle*, yet like the paragraph which opened this article, such a statement reflects the genius of Madame Rambert. It is one of the open secrets of her continued success as an artistic director that she moves with the times almost before the times move themselves. Therefore if angry young men are the artistic fashion of the day, it follows that Marie Rambert will have at least one in her ballet company.

BOOKS—(*Continued from page* 16)

the one I have quoted. The book is a lively account of the life of a touring company in many countries and their peoples; cultures, and customs are seen through the eyes of a dancer and choreographer. His meeting with Uday Shankar and his accounts of the Nõ dramas and Kabuki theatre, for instance, are especially interesting. But the figure of Pavlova remains nebulous, even though illumined by that great love and reverence for her and her art he shared with all her company. There is a vivid description of her mad scene in *Giselle* as seen by those on stage; but one could have wished for a more revealing light on this genius of the dance, with whom he was fortunate enough to work daily in rehearsal and performance, than the various rather trite little glimpses given.

One does not regret, however, that the statement in the blurb that "he discusses her marriage to Dandré and the mystery surrounding it" is not fulfilled; while he dispels—forever, I trust—the false belief nurtured in some quarters, that Pavlova was only interested in her own art.

However, a very modest and engaging portrait of Algeranoff himself emerges. Ballet-goers will remember him best as Pierrot in *Carnaval*, and the Astrologer in *Coq D'Or* with the Russian companies, and as leading character dancer with International Ballet.

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THE REMINISCENCES OF BORIS KNIASEFF

PART THREE

DURING my years of collaboration with Spessivtseva, my ballet *La Légende du Bouleau* was born and became for me one of the dearest of my choreographic creations. Later on thousands of people saw this work. Lovers of ballet and critics often asked me how it began.

In my extreme youth, spent partly in South Russia, I wrote the poem "Le Bouleau"—The Birch-tree. Here it is.

Pour un bouleau, le vent se prit d'amour,
The wind fell in love with a birch-tree

Chuchotant: "Aime-moi",
Whispering "Love me",

Et l'enlace amoureusement.
He embraces her tenderly.

"Je veux te donner un baiser
I want to give you a kiss

Et te dirai des contes
And I will tell you stories

Que personne n'entendit jamais
That no-one has ever heard

Et je te donnerai en cadeau mes caresse,
And I will give you my caresses as gifts,

Viens, penche-toi, que personne ne nous voie.
Come, lean over, let no-one see us."

Il l'embrassa. Le bouleau s'inclina,
He embraced her. The birch tree inclined,

Cachant son feuillage, pris de honte,
Bashfully, hiding her foliage,

Plus bas . . . Plus bas . . . et se brisa,
Lower . . . lower . . . and then she broke,

N'ayant pas même dit: "Je t'aime".
Without having even said "I love you".

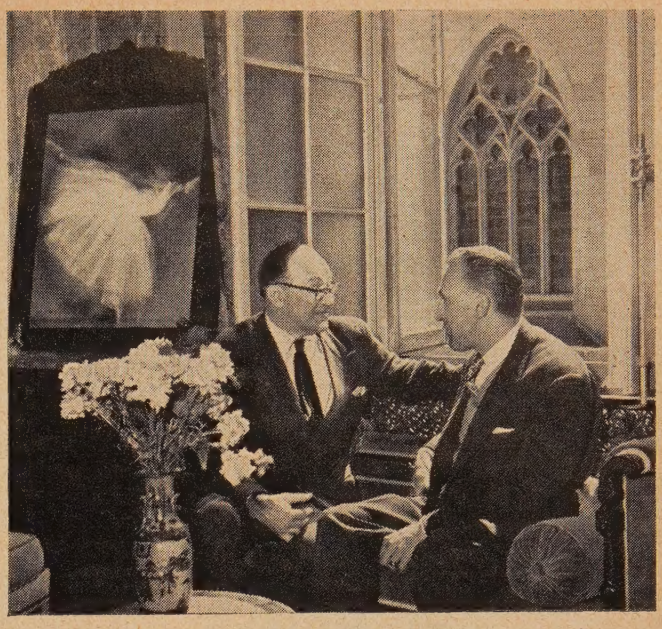
Lost amongst some old papers, this poem came with me to Paris. I read it to Spessivtseva. It pleased her very much. After that, she often asked me to read it to her again. Each time, as I read her the poem and looked at her thin, delicate oval face, her large, sad eyes, I would think, "It is she, Olga, who is our slender Russian birch-tree shattered at the moment by the icy winds which whistle and howl through the dance world. One evening, I had the idea of creating a ballet based on "The Bouleau". Olga was very enthusiastic about it and we spent many evenings discussing how best to bring this ballet into realisation. I wanted to entrust the musical composition to a fashionable Spanish composer who was in raptures over the subject. When I told this to Olga she shook her head pensively and said gently. "I do not know Boris, it is quite possible that I have not understood. You are the author and you yourself should know what is best. However, it seems to me that no foreigner however sympathetic, will understand the subject and be inspired with the necessary understanding. No, we must have a Russian composer, Russian music. The decors and costumes must also be the work of Russians. I think tnat Gautcharova would do it well."

Her remarkable artistic flair and her faith in all that was Russian carried the day over my doubts. After several attempts, everything was done as she had said. The music for *Bouleau* was taken from Tchaikovsky and the remarkable costumes and decors were created by Natalie Gautcharova. In this guise, the ballet had a successful progress from Paris to Buenos Aires. A large part of this success must be attributed to the delicate artistic feeling of Spessivtseva who from the beginning determined the right road for the realisation on stage of my *Bouleau.*

Alas it was not granted to her to appear in the ballet and fulfil the part she should have played in its creation. Valentina Blinova, Yvette Chauviré in Paris, Geneviève Moulin in London and Béatrice Doran in Buenos Aires all won that enthusiastic acclaim that I might have brought to Olga Spessivtseva. As I have already said above, the years of our collaboration belonged to a period in which classical ballet was staggering under the blows inflicted by modern ideas.

Spessivtseva who was always taciturn did not like to take part in discussions on art. "What is the use of disputes?" she would say. "What is the point of convincing and proving? Words have no point, we must act. We must make classical ballets and dance them as they used to be danced whilst transposing them to suit the spirit of the age. One must prove with actions not words."

Sometimes in our conversations she would speak of the mortal struggle between classicism and new conceptions introduced into the dance. I remember her large eyes as she stared hard at me during these conversations and said, "Boris, do not devote your gifts to modernism. You have no right to do that. All of that is nothing but a passing fashion, it is not art. Serve classicism, do not swerve to right or left. Go straight along the path of the eternal art. If it does not always satisfy you, then try to rejuvenate it, to renew and embellish it; but never betray it."



Boris Kniaseff (left) *at his Academy in Geneva with Jean Silvant. A portrait of Olga Spessivtseva can be seen at the left of the picture.*

At that time, I was no longer disposed to submit to the charm of modernism. However, it was clear to me that a rigid classicism no matter how elevated, was condemned to a slow death. Thus to those in the profession, there were two ways open: the one to renounce classical dancing and leave it to its fate whilst seeking salvation in modernism. The second ; to attempt to snatch classicism from its position and infuse new life into it, leading it along new paths in keeping with the outlook and spirit of new generations. I chose the second. Whilst holding to the eternal principles of the classical dance, I strove to create new forms for it through which fresh material might enter. As dancer, choreographer and author, I have spent all my life doing this. I am indebted to Olga Spessivtseva, to her marvellous dancing genius, to her delicate understanding and to all which makes for grandeur and beauty in the art, for having kept me firmly all through that time on that road which in my opinion is the only right one.

Spessivtseva was one of the Almighty's most beautiful creations. In many situations in life, she did not react in the usual manner. She was as if engrossed in a world accessible to herself alone and only part of her belonged to our life. The other part, the most remarkable part, was beyond this earthly life. She belonged to a world beyond ours and this sometimes made me full of anxiety for her. It seemed to me at times that she was linked to this world of ours by only a very slender thread which could be snapped at any moment and then . . . Then came what is somewhat misleadingly called in human terms, madness. Indeed it is often we who seem odd to those we call mad. Often looking around one, it is difficult to say who is right.

It was thus that Olga Spessivtseva left our life. She was certified as mad by the doctors—and no doubt it was they who seemed mad to her. Certainly from a medical point of view, the doctors were right. However from the point of view of that world remote from ours perhaps it was Spessivtseva who was right.

Legends grew up and fantastic tales were invented by the idle about this tragic end to her earthly life. They talked about all the usual things that are brought up in such a situation. But no-one pointed out that during her short and brilliant life, she was never part of our world. That fragile link, that slender fatal thread which was still holding her to us sooner or later had to snap.

It has snapped—and Olga Spessivtseva has left us. She had to leave us—she was not for this world.

And this world was not for her.

This concludes the present series of The Reminiscences of Boris Kniaseff.

Parts 1 (July) and 2 (Sept.) can be obtained price 1s. 9d. each part, post paid.

An article describing Boris Kniaseff's method of teaching will be published shortly.

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MALTA

The Lina Perry Ballet Group has been in active session for about two years. The training is modelled on Royal Academy of Dancing lines, and the syllabus includes work in the classical, modern, tap and character spheres.

Despite the fact that there is no opportunity to take up ballet as a local career, some 30 pupils are working hard in the Workshop. The main accent for the Advanced class lies at present in the working up of a number of 15-minute impressionist "ballettes."

A number of the Advanced and Intermediates recently appeared in the opera *Adriana Lecouviere* presented by an Italian opera company. Although rehearsals with the company reached completion for the ballet sequence in "Pescatore de Perle"—an Oriental classic—the pupils were not to appear on the stage in the first night.

The Group was chosen to dance in the Malta Trade Fair opening ceremony and were picked from among the Island's amateurs to dance in a "Pick of the Island" show put up by the local Rediffusion company recently. Several Maltese and English variety and revue companies have also called on the Group's services for fillers and solo items, mostly demanding classical approaches.

A full ballet programme involving classical and modern ballet is on the stocks for future presentation.

Mrs. Perry is helped in her search for grace and line by the inborn gracefulness inherent in local girls, some of whom have an Italian background; others are the daughters of English service personnel sent out here.

The high cost of putting on an all-ballet recital has precluded such a fillip from taking place, but the entire Group is happy enough just now in training hard and accumulating items for that great day when the first and last items on the programme read . . ."Lina Perry's Ballet Group present . . ."

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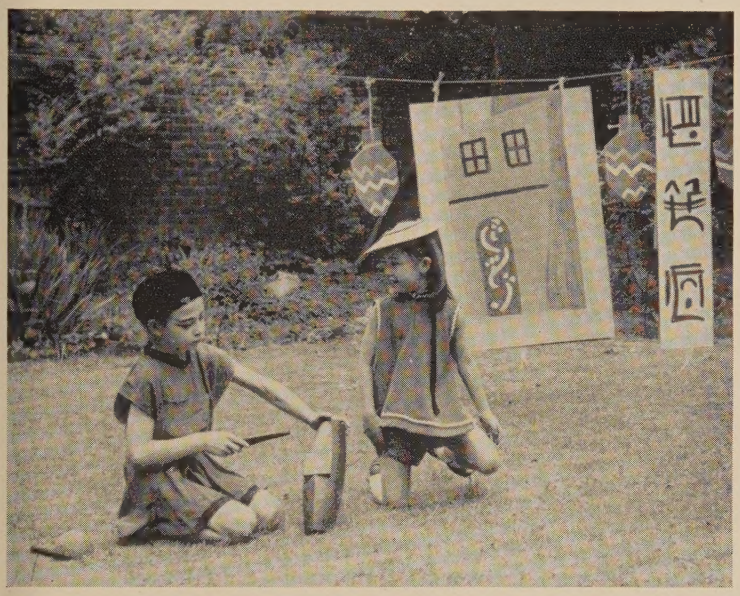
THE ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL

H.R.H. Princess Margaret visited the Royal Ballet School at White Lodge, Richmond Park recently, and can be seen seated between Arnold Haskell and Dame Ninette de Valois, watching one of the classes.

Before it housed the Royal Ballet School, White Lodge was the first home of the Queen Mother after her marriage to King George VI—then the Duke of York.



THE CHILDREN'S DANCE THEATRE

The Children's Dance Theatre, directed by Lilian Harmel gave two performances of ballets during the Hampstead Festival.

Above picture shows a Chinese village scene from *Hok Lee*, a dance play staged by children from 4 to 12 years, assisted in choreography and music by Lilian Harmel. Hok Lee was danced by Elizabeth Erlebach, who proved to be a Jack of all trades, Debby Cranston was the cunning little wizard, Jennifer Sprince her able assistant and Ninette Harmel, the doctor-magician.

The photo shows *Elizabeth Erlebach and Debby Cranston*

HILDE HOLGER PRODUCTION GROUP

The performance given by Hilde Holger's pupils at Portland Hall on June 28th was distinguished by great earnestness and enthusiasm. In the first half of the programme some very young children took part, their chief claim being their natural uninhibited high spirits, though *The Madonna*, danced to an Austrian folk tune by Eileen Cramer and arranged by Gertrud Bodenwieser, was characterised by deep sincerity and showed considerable intelligence and feeling on the part of the young performers. Eileen Cramer is worth watching. The second half of the programme was more disciplined and considerably more ambitious, the *Rhythm of the East* and the equestrian experiment in *Men and Horses* being particularly imaginative and impressive. E.C.

Bottom right: *Rhythm of the East.* Photo: Douglas Elston

FOLLOW THE STARS

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